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This newsletter is provided by the Indiana Department of Environmental Management for child care facilities participating in the 5-Star Environmental Recognition Program. This newsletter provides updates on environmental issues affecting children. Please feel free to use these articles in your own newsletters. We encourage you to post this in areas where parents will have access to it.

If you have any questions or comments about the information included here, please contact Karen Teliha at 800-988-7901.

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## Ten Things You Should Know About Mold

Concern about indoor exposure to mold has been increasing as more people become aware that exposure to mold can cause a variety of health effects and symptoms, including allergic reactions. Keep these 10 things in mind when dealing with mold and moisture.

1. Potential health effects and symptoms associated with mold exposures include allergic reactions, asthma, and other respiratory complaints.

2. There is no practical way to eliminate all mold and mold spores in the indoor environment; the way to control indoor mold growth is to control moisture.

3. If mold is a problem in your home or childcare, you must clean up the mold and eliminate sources of moisture.

4. Fix the source of the water problem or leak to prevent mold growth.

5. Reduce indoor humidity (to 30-60% ) to decrease mold growth by: venting bathrooms, dryers, and other moisture-generating sources to the outside; using air conditioners and dehumidifiers; increasing ventilation; and using exhaust fans whenever cooking, dishwashing, and cleaning.

6. Clean and dry any damp or wet building materials and furnishings within 24-48 hours to prevent mold growth.

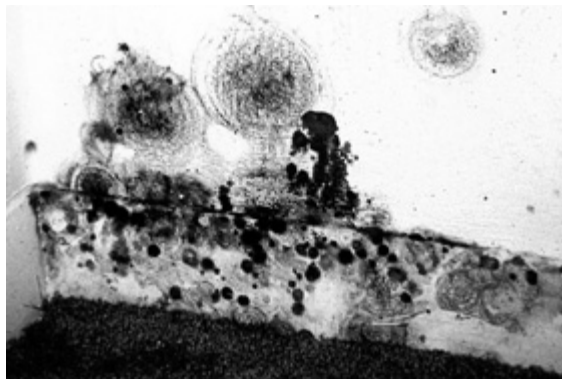
7. Clean mold off hard surfaces with water and detergent, and dry completely. Absorbent materials such as ceiling tiles, that are moldy, may need to be replaced.

8. Prevent condensation: Reduce the potential for condensation on cold surfaces (i.e., windows, piping, exterior walls, roof, or floors) by adding

insulation.

9. In areas where there is a perpetual moisture problem, do not install carpeting (i.e., by drinking fountains, by classroom sinks, or on concrete floors with leaks or frequent condensation).

10. Molds can be found almost anywhere; they can grow on virtually any substance, providing moisture is present. There are molds that can grow on wood, paper, carpet, and foods.



## **“A Brief Guide to Mold, Moisture, and Your Home”**

This Guide provides information and guidance for homeowners and renters on how to clean up residential mold problems and how to prevent mold growth.

[EPA 402-K-02-003]

## **“Mold Remediation in Schools and Commercial Buildings”**

This document presents guidelines for the remediation/cleanup of mold and moisture problems in schools and commercial buildings; these guidelines include measures designed to protect the health of building occupants and remediators. It has been designed primarily for building managers, custodians, and others who are responsible for commercial building and school maintenance. It should serve as a reference for potential mold and moisture remediators. Using this document, individuals with little or no experience with mold remediation should be able to make a reasonable judgment as to whether the situation can be handled in-house. It will help those in charge of maintenance to evaluate an in-house remediation plan or a remediation plan submitted by an outside contractor. [EPA 402-K-01-001, March 2001]

**Available by calling  
800-438-4318 or on  
the web at  
[www.epa.gov/iaq/  
molds/](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/molds/)**

# **Should You Have the Air Ducts Cleaned?**

You should consider having the air ducts in your home cleaned if:

1. There is substantial visible mold growth inside hard surface (e.g., sheet metal) ducts or on other components of your heating and cooling system. There are several important points to understand concerning mold detection in heating and cooling systems:

- Many sections of your heating and cooling system may not be accessible for a visible inspection, so ask the service provider to show you any mold they say exists.
- You should be aware that although a substance may look like mold, a positive determination of whether it is mold or not can be made only by an expert and may require laboratory analysis for final confirmation. For about \$50, some microbiology laboratories can tell you whether a sample sent to them on a clear strip of sticky household tape is mold or simply a substance that resembles it.
- If you have insulated air ducts and the insulation gets wet or moldy it cannot be effectively cleaned and should be removed and replaced.
- If the conditions causing the mold growth in the first place are not corrected, mold growth will recur.

2. Ducts are infested with vermin, e.g. (rodents or insects); or

3. Ducts are clogged with excessive amounts of dust and debris and/or particles are actually released into the home from your supply registers.

## **Thanks for the idea!**

In our last issue of “simple steps...”, there was a page of information on fire safety which included a small box with directions for how to use fire extinguishers.

One of our readers said she cut out the box and posted it above the fire extinguisher.

Consider making your own sign with the PASS directions, or use the attached sticker on your fire extinguisher.



# National Radon Action Month is January 1 - 31, 2003

Radon is a health risk facing millions of Americans. January has been designated by the U.S. EPA as National Radon Action Month (NRAM). Like National Radon Action Week, the focus of NRAM is to promote awareness about, testing for, and mitigation of, indoor radon gas with various events and outreach campaigns.

Volunteers, health advocates, the media, local government officials and many health professionals like you are the driving force in getting the message out to consumers about the dangers of indoor radon gas. Make January your key month to conduct an event or plan an outreach campaign on radon awareness. To help you get started or improve on your current efforts, see the Radon Outreach and Education Materials enclosed. Also, consider distributing to parents the attached coupon for discounted radon test kits.



## Radon Test Kit Coupon



The National Safety Council offers low-cost short- and long-term radon test kits through its National Radon Hotline to people who want to test their homes. The price includes lab analysis and return postage. The kits need only be used according to directions on the package and then sealed and promptly returned to the lab for analysis. Results are provided within a few weeks, along with information on how to reduce radon risks, if necessary.

To order a radon test kit, cut and fill out the coupon corresponding to which kit you would like, and mail it to us with a check, money order, or your credit card information. Please allow four to six weeks for delivery. For faster processing, kits can be ordered directly from the Helpline, (800) 557-2366, with a credit card payment.

Send coupon and  
payment to:

National Safety  
Council  
Radon Test Kit  
Offer  
P.O. Box 65721  
Washington, DC  
20035

For more information,  
call (800) 557-2366.

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>YES! I want to test my home for RADON</b>	
Please rush me my National Safety Council Radon Detection Kit	
Name _____	Number of Kits _____
Address _____	
City _____	State _____ Zip _____
Phone Number _____	
Account Number _____	 
Expiration Date _____	
Mail this coupon and your check, money order, or credit card information for \$9.95* per kit to: National Safety Council Radon Test Kit Offer P.O. Box 65721 Washington, DC 20035 <i>Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.</i>	
*\$17.00 per kit for New Jersey residents.	

# Radon <sup>only</sup> \$9<sup>95</sup> Detection Kit

A savings of approximately \$10.00

Testing for radon is simple. Now you can get a radon test kit for only \$9.95\* from the National Safety Council.

This radon detector is a short-term test kit. Just follow the directions on the package and return the entire kit to the manufacturer for analysis at no additional cost. You'll get the results along with information about corrective measures you can take to lower your radon level, if necessary.

Remember that radon is the second leading cause of lung cancer in the United States. Testing for radon is important for your family's health and well-being. For your National Safety Council Radon Detection Kit, simply fill out the information on this coupon and mail it along with a check or money order for \$9.95 per test kit today.

NSC WEB

If you have specific questions about radon, please call the Radon Helpline at (800) 55-RADON.

# Fight Lead Poisoning with a Healthy Diet

Children with empty stomachs absorb more lead than children with full stomachs. Provide children with four to six small meals during the day. The following nutrients can help protect children from lead poisoning:

## ***Iron-Rich Foods***

Normal levels of iron work to protect the body from the harmful effects of lead. Good sources of dietary iron include: lean red meats, fish, and chicken; iron-fortified cereals; and dried fruits (raisins, prunes).



## ***Calcium-Rich Foods***

Calcium reduces lead absorption and also helps make teeth and bones strong. Good sources of dietary calcium include: milk, yogurt, cheese, and green leafy vegetables (spinach, kale, collard greens).

## ***Vitamin C-Rich Foods***

Vitamin C and iron-rich foods work together to reduce lead absorption. Good sources of vitamin C include: oranges, orange juice, grapefruits, grapefruit juice, tomatoes, tomato juice, and green peppers.

Order additional copies of the enclosed brochure “Fight Lead Poisoning with a Healthy Diet” by calling the National Lead Information Center at 800-424-LEAD. Also available in Spanish.

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## Pedal Cars Recalled due to Lead Paint

In cooperation with the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, (CPSC), Alpha International Inc., also known as Gearbox Pedal Car Company is voluntarily recalling about 75,000 pedal cars. The paint coating on some of these pedal cars contains high lead levels. CPSC standards ban toys and other children’s products containing high levels of lead. Young children could ingest the lead from the car’s paint coating, presenting a lead poisoning hazard.

Alpha International has not received any reports of injuries involving these pedal cars. This recall is being conducted to prevent the possibility of injury.



There are 17 models of the pedal cars included in the recall. Models include three fire trucks, four police cars, eight sedans, one yellow taxi, and one dump truck. Model names are listed below:

**Fire Trucks:** “Fire Truck,” “John Deere” and “Texaco.”

**Police Cars:** “NYPD,” “Chicago Police,” “Highway Patrol” and “EMERGENCY 911.”

**Sedans:** pink “Champion,” blue “Champion,” “Texaco,” “John Deere,” “Citgo,” “Raley’s Coca-Cola,” “Raley’s Keebler,” and “Red Lion.”

For additional information, please contact the Consumer Product Safety Commission.



# IDEM teams with Five Star Childcare Facilities to Ensure Pest-Free Learning Environments for Children



IDEM Commissioner Lori Kaplan visited Monroe County United Ministries (MCUM), a 5-Star facility, on November 14 to thank them and the Bloomington Developmental Learning Center (BDLC), also a 5-star facility for encouraging Hoosier childcare facilities to reduce pests and pesticide exposure.

“Parents may not think about pest management when they choose a childcare facility for their children, but it is very important both for humans and the environment to focus on ways to keep harmful pests as well as harmful pesticides away from children,” Kaplan said. “By taking this plan off the drawing board and putting it into place in the real world, MCUM and BDLC has really helped us prove that this plan will work for everyone.”

MCUM and BDLC were two of four child care facilities to host the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) pilot program. The child care pilot program participants also included Elka Child Educational Center (Gary), and Auntie Mame's Child Development Center (Indianapolis).

“We were eager to take part in this pilot because we knew each of the partners involved IDEM, Purdue and IU had the children in mind,” said Meri Reinhold, Executive Director of MCUM. “They really helped us think it through and put together a process that made sense and worked for us.”

Kaplan credited cooperation among the Purdue University Department of Entomology, Indiana University and the State Chemist's Office as key to

developing and demonstrating the effectiveness of the IPM plan. In addition to IDEM's promotion of the plan, Purdue will encourage Hoosiers to adopt the plan through its Consumer and Family Sciences Department and its statewide County Extension Service.

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*“I hope everyone who is entrusted with our children's care will put (this plan) into practice.”*

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“This plan provides a clear and simple way to improve children's health throughout Indiana,” said Al Fournier, Purdue's IPM in School Coordinator.

Dr. Marc Lame, an Entomologist and Communication Specialist at Indiana University's School of Public Affairs and Environmental Sciences, said: “This grant was a great investment in Indiana's children, and I hope everyone who is entrusted with our children's care will put it into practice.”

IPM is designed to achieve long-term, environmentally sound pest suppression in a number of ways including reducing accessible food, water and living space, and sealing up entry routes into buildings. Pesticides are used

only when a confirmed pest problem is present and preventative treatment will not work. Before treatment is applied, staff and parents are notified, and the least-hazardous but effective pesticide is used.

For more information about starting an IPM program in your facility, call the IPM Technical Resource Center hotline, toll-free, at 877-668-8476, or reach us on the web at [www.in.gov/idem/kids/integratedpest.html](http://www.in.gov/idem/kids/integratedpest.html).



*IDEM's Commissioner thanks Meri Reinhold, Executive Director of MCUM.*

# Moisture Control

Water in your home or childcare can come from many sources. Water can enter by leaking or by seeping through basement floors. Showers or even cooking can add moisture to the air in your home. The amount of moisture that the air inside can hold depends on the temperature of the air. As the temperature goes down, the air is able to hold less moisture. This is why, in cold weather, moisture condenses on cold surfaces (for example, drops of water form on the inside of a window). This moisture can encourage biological pollutants to grow.

There are many ways to control moisture in your building:

- Fix leaks and seepage. If water is entering from the outside, your options range from simple landscaping to extensive excavation and waterproofing. (The ground should slope away from the house.) Water in the basement can result from the lack of gutters or a water flow toward the house. Water leaks in pipes or around tubs and sinks can provide a place for biological pollutants to grow.
- Put a plastic cover over dirt in crawlspaces to prevent moisture from coming in from the ground. Be sure crawlspaces are well-ventilated.
- Use exhaust fans in bathrooms and kitchens to remove moisture to the outside (not into the attic).
- Vent your clothes dryer to the outside.
- Turn off certain appliances (such as humidifiers or kerosene heaters) if you notice moisture on windows and other surfaces.
- Use dehumidifiers and air conditioners, especially in hot, humid climates, to reduce moisture in the air, but be sure



that the appliances themselves don't become sources of biological pollutants.

- Raise the temperature of cold surfaces where moisture condenses. Use insulation or storm windows. (A storm window installed on the inside works better than one installed on the outside.) Open doors between rooms (especially doors to closets which may be colder than the rooms) to increase circulation. Circulation carries heat to the cold surfaces. Increase air circulation by using fans and by moving furniture from wall corners to promote air and heat circulation. Be sure that your building has a source of fresh air and can expel excessive moisture from the home.
- Pay special attention to carpet on concrete floors. Carpet can absorb moisture and serve as a place for biological pollutants to grow. Use area rugs which can be taken up and washed often. In certain climates, if carpet is to be installed over a concrete floor, it may be necessary to use a vapor barrier (plastic sheeting) over the concrete and cover that with sub-flooring (insulation covered with plywood) to prevent a moisture problem.
- Moisture problems and their solutions differ from one climate to another. The Northeast is cold and wet; the Southwest is hot and dry; the South is hot and wet; and the Western Mountain states are cold and dry. All of these regions can have moisture problems. For example, evaporative coolers used in the Southwest can encourage the growth of biological pollutants. In other hot regions, the use of air conditioners which cool the air too quickly may prevent the air conditioners from running long enough to remove excess moisture from the air. The types of construction and weatherization for the different climates can lead to different problems and solutions.

# Longer-lasting Subcompact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs) Available for \$ 4.95

Introducing energy-efficient compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) into your home or childcare just got easier. A group of lighting manufacturers are offering sub-compact fluorescent lamps (sub-CFLs) through a U.S. Department of Energy program designed to bring new and shorter lamps to market. The sub-CFLs are energy-efficient and long lasting, plus they fit into most incandescent fixtures!



For additional information, or to comment about this program, contact Kathi Ruiz of the U.S. Department of Energy's Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL) at (503) 417-7551.

Now they can be ordered directly from the manufacturer at very competitive prices. To stimulate the market for sub-CFLs, suppliers are selling the lamps at specially arranged prices directly to volume buyers such as multi-family building owners/operators, universities, public housing authorities, hotel/motel companies, federal agencies, and lighting product resellers.

The suppliers are offering 15- to 26-watt sub-CFLs for as low as \$4.95 for volume purchases, including delivery. Smaller orders may cost slightly more. Suppliers will deliver a minimum order of six lamps to locations in the United States and U.S. Territories. (The sub-CFLs carry an unconditional one-year warranty among the best in the industry).

The bulbs are available at [Betterbulbsdirect.com](http://Betterbulbsdirect.com)

## What Is Different About These Sub-CFLs?

The lower-cost, shorter sub-CFLs screw into conventional sockets and fit inside most existing fixtures. In addition, these CFLs:

- Produce enough light to replace standard 60- to 100-watt incandescent light bulbs
- Use one-fourth to one-third as much energy
- Last 8 to 10 times longer than incandescent light bulbs
- Save more than \$15 per year on average per retrofitted applications (used 12 hours per day), and
- Pay back their cost in 6 months.

## Holiday Recycling Facts

Every year, there are 2.65 billion holiday cards sold in the U.S. That's enough to fill a football stadium field 10 stories high! Please send your old cards to St. Jude's Ranch for Children for recycling.



Americans throw away about 25% more trash between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve. That's an additional 5 million tons of garbage!



If every American family wrapped just 3 presents in re-used materials, it would save enough paper to cover 45,000 football fields.

# IF YOU DON'T DO ANYTHING ELSE...

## QUICK TIPS THAT ARE SURE ENERGY SAVERS:

1) **Buy ENERGY STAR® labeled office equipment, and other products,** when needed, and be sure the “stand-by mode” function is activated.



2) **Install “occupant sensors” in the proper locations to automatically turn off lighting when no one is present,** and back on when they return. Sensors add convenience as well as save money.

4) **Adjust lighting to your actual needs; use free “daylighting.”** This means turn off or dim your lights when daylight is adequate, or use automatic “daylight dimming” ballasts/controls to do this for you.

5) **“Tune-up” your HVAC system with an annual maintenance contract.** A yearly “maintenance contract” will cost about \$100, but can save even more than it costs.

6) **Regularly change (or clean if reusable) the HVAC filters with your own “do-it-yourself” labor for a high “return-on-investment.”** During peak cooling or heating season, change or clean your filters every month; they cost about \$2-3 each. Dirty filters can cost up to \$5 a month extra, overwork the equipment, and result in dirtier indoor air. Consider purchasing “electrostatic” filters, which are washable, long lasting, and provide cleaner air.

7) **Install a programmable thermostat to automate your HVAC system.** A programmable thermostat can cost \$25 to \$150, and it could cut your HVAC costs about 30%.

8) **Replace incandescent light bulbs with compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs), wherever appropriate.**

CFLs cost about 75% less to operate, and last about 10 times longer. Enough said.



9) **Install LED (light-emitting diode) exit signs.** Your current fixture may accept a simple, “screw-in” lighting element to replace the small incandescent bulbs that burn out with frustrating frequency. This string of LEDs will cost about \$15 to \$20, will last decades, give brighter light, and end risky ladder climbing to replace bulbs. If your current exit sign will not accept the screw-in lighting element, a new LED exit sign fixture costs about \$100, and will still save about 90% over incandescent bulbs’ operating costs.

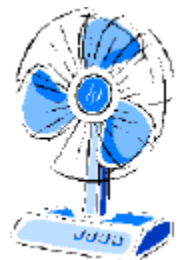
10) **Control direct sun through windows.** During cooling season, block direct heat gain from the sun shining through glass on the East, and especially West sides of the building. Depending on your situation, there are several options such as “solar screen,” “solar film,” awnings, and vines. Over time, trees can attractively shade the glass and building.



Interior curtains or drapes can help, but it’s best to prevent the Summer heat from getting past the glass and inside.

During heating season, with the sun low in the South, unobstructed Southern windows can contribute heat gain during the day, but should be covered at night.

11) **Use fans.** Comfort is a function of temperature, humidity, and air movement. Moving air can make a somewhat higher temperature and/or humidity feel comfortable. Fans can help delay or reduce the need for air-conditioning, and a temperature setting of only 3-5 degrees higher can feel as comfortable with fans. Each degree of higher temperature can save about 3% on cooling costs.



12) **Plug the leaks with weatherstripping and caulking;** another cheap “do-it-yourself” job.



# Mercury, Thimerosal, & Vaccines



For several years, there has been concern about the possibilities of childhood vaccinations causing autism. The main concern appeared to be from thimerosal, a preservative used in some vaccinations. Thimerosal contains mercury.

As recently as November, at least one study was released on the relationship between thimerosal and autism and Congress was voting on a bill regarding thimerosal. Because of the recent press, it might be helpful to provide background information. For additional information check the web at [www.cdc.gov/nip/vacsafe/concerns/thimerosal/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vacsafe/concerns/thimerosal/default.htm)

## **What is thimerosal?**

Thimerosal is a very effective preservative that has been used in some vaccines and other products since the 1930's. Thimerosal contains approximately 49% ethylmercury. There is no evidence of harm caused by the low doses of thimerosal in vaccines, except for minor reactions like redness and swelling at the injection site. However, in July 1999 the Public Health Service (PHS) agencies, the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), and vaccine manufacturers agreed that thimerosal should be reduced or eliminated in vaccines as a precautionary measure. Today, all routinely recommended licensed pediatric vaccines that are currently being manufactured for the U.S. market contain no thimerosal or only trace amounts.

## **What progress has been made since July 1999 in removing thimerosal from vaccines routinely recommended for infants?**

Substantial progress has been made in the effort to reduce thimerosal exposure from vaccines. At this time, all routinely recommended licensed pediatric vaccines that are currently being manufactured for the U.S. market, contain no thimerosal or contain only trace amounts of thimerosal. The vaccines with trace amount of thimerosal licensed to date contain less than 0.5 micrograms of mercury per dose, that is, a given dose of vaccine contains less than 1 part per million.



Two hepatitis B vaccines are thimerosal free, four Hib vaccines are thimerosal free, and two DTaP vaccines are thimerosal free.

Prior to the recent initiative to reduce or eliminate thimerosal from childhood vaccines, the maximum cumulative exposure to mercury via routine childhood vaccinations during the first six months of life was 187.5 micrograms. With the newly formulated vaccines, the maximum cumulative exposure during the first six months of life will now be less than three micrograms of mercury; this represents a greater than 98 percent reduction in the amount of mercury a child would receive from vaccines in the first six months of life.

## **I've heard that children may be getting toxic levels of mercury from vaccines. Is that true?**

No. There is no evidence of harm caused by the minute doses of thimerosal in vaccines, except for minor effects like swelling and redness at the injection site due to sensitivity to thimerosal.

Most importantly, since 1999, newly formulated thimerosal preservative-free vaccines have been licensed. With the newly formulated vaccines, the maximum cumulative exposure during the first six months of life will now be less than three micrograms of mercury. No children are receiving toxic levels of mercury from vaccines.

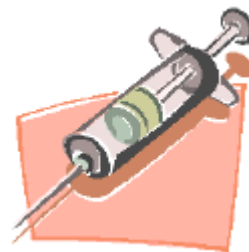
### **Does thimerosal cause autism?**

There is no evidence that any vaccine or vaccine additive increases the risk of developing autism or any other behavior disorder. Nonetheless, given the level of concern among parents and others regarding vaccines and autism, the CDC is committed to investigating this issue to the fullest extent possible, using the best scientific methods available.

For more information on autism and vaccines go to [www.cdc.gov/nip/vacsafe/concerns/autism/default.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/nip/vacsafe/concerns/autism/default.htm)

### **Which vaccines do not contain thimerosal?**

Today, all vaccines in the recommended childhood immunization schedule that are for use in the U.S. market contain no thimerosal or only trace amounts. (Those with a concentration of less than 0.0002% contain what is considered “trace,” or insignificant, amounts.) Influenza (flu) vaccines and tetanus and diphtheria vaccines (Td and DT) are not available without thimerosal. For more information on thimerosal content in some currently manufactured U.S. licensed vaccines, go to <http://www.fda.gov/cber/vaccine/thimerosal.htm>



### **Why weren't thimerosal-containing vaccines taken off the market?**

Scientific data have not established that vaccines containing thimerosal, used as a preservative, create an imminent or substantial hazard to public health or are in violation of FDA laws or regulations, and therefore do not justify such a recall. A mandatory recall requires that the product present “an imminent or substantial hazard to the public health.”

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is responsible for voluntary and mandatory recalls of drug and vaccine products. The FDA continuously monitors the safety of these products.

### **Do measles, mumps, and rubella (MMR) vaccines contain thimerosal?**

No, MMR vaccine does not and never did contain thimerosal. Varicella (chickenpox), inactivated polio (IPV), and pneumococcal conjugate vaccines have also never contained thimerosal.

### **How can I find out what chemical additives are in specific vaccines?**

Ask your healthcare provider or pharmacist for a copy of the vaccine package insert. The package insert lists ingredients in the vaccine and discusses any known adverse reactions.

## **Childhood Immunization Scheduler for Children 5 Years Old or Younger**

Get a personalized immunization schedule for  
children. Just type in their birth date.

Available free on the web at:

**[www2.cdc.gov/nip/scheduler\\_le/default.asp](http://www2.cdc.gov/nip/scheduler_le/default.asp)**



## Multiple Pets May Decrease Children's Allergy Risk

Children raised in a house with two or more dogs or cats during the first year of life may be less

likely to develop allergic diseases as compared with children raised without pets, according to a study in the August 28 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*.

The study suggests that bacteria carried by pets may be responsible for suppressing the immune system's allergic response. These bacteria release molecules called endotoxins are believed to shift the developing immune system away from responding to allergens.

After adjusting for factors such as dust mite allergen levels, parental smoking, and current dog or cat ownership, the researchers found that children exposed to two or more dogs or cats during the first year of life were on average 66 to 77 percent less likely to have any allergic antibodies to common allergens, as compared with

children exposed to only one or no pets during their first year.

"Our findings suggest an area of research with many possibilities, one that could potentially bear fruit over the next decade or so," says Dr. Ownby. "If we could find out exactly what it is about pets or the bacteria they carry that prevents the allergic response, scientists might be able to develop a new allergy therapy based on that knowledge."

For the full story, refer to the web at: <http://www.nih.gov/news/pr/aug2002/niaid-27.htm>



## Cat Exposure Can Protect from Asthma - But There's an Exception: It Increases Asthma Risk for Children of Asthmatic Mothers

For many years, scientists thought that cat exposure increased a child's asthma risk. Recent studies, however, have suggested that exposure to high levels of cat allergen during infancy can actually protect children against developing asthma. On September 5, a new study supported by two institutes of the National Institutes of Health adds another twist to the developing story.

The new study confirmed the protective effect of cat exposure for at-risk children in all but one situation: When the child's mother has asthma. If the mother has asthma, then a cat in the home actually triples the risk that a child will develop persistent wheezing - an initial indication of asthma - by age five.

"For years, physicians have been advising families with allergies to stay away from pets," says Dr. Celedón.

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***"Being exposed to a cat early in life may be beneficial."***

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"However, it appears that for a vast majority of children, being exposed to a cat early in life may be beneficial. That said, there is a subgroup of children - those whose mothers have asthma and, perhaps, those whose mothers are allergic to cats - who should probably avoid cat exposure." Children with documented cat allergy or with asthmatic symptoms triggered by a cat should also avoid cats, he adds.

For the entire story, refer to the web at: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/oc/news/catasth.htm>



# 2003 National Environmental Health Observances

## January

National Birth Defects Prevention Month

## February

American Heart Month

## March

American Red Cross Month

National Nutrition Month

Brain Awareness Week (10th-16th)

National Poison Prevention Week (16th-22nd)



## April

Kick Butts Day (2nd)

National Public Health Week (7th-13th)

Earth Day (22nd)



## May

Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month

Clean Air Month

Lyme Disease Awareness Month

National SAFE KIDS Week

North American Occupational Safety and Health Week

National Melanoma/Skin Cancer Detection and Prevention Month

National Sight-Saving

Month: Ultraviolet

Awareness & Home Eye Safety

Skin Cancer Awareness Month



## August

National Immunization Awareness Month

## September

Baby Safety Month

National Food Safety Education Month

## October

National Home Indoor Air Quality Action and Awareness Month

National Children's Health Month



National Fire Prevention Week (5th-11th)

National Child Health Day (6th)

National Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Week (19th-25th)



## November

Great American Smokeout (20th)

## December

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

National Hand Washing Awareness Week (7th-13th)